

TALENT ON STAGE



THEY CAME A-KNOCKIN'—Columbia Records executives greeted Dave Edmunds after a recent show at the Ritz in New York, where he played in support of his "I Hear You Rockin'" album. Pictured (l-r): Paul Rappaport, VP nat'l album promotion; Linda Kirishjian, mgr., nat'l album promotion; Amy Strauss, mgr., prod mkt'g; Bob Kranes, music dir., WXRK; Joe McEwen, dir. A&R; Jerry Lembo, local promo mgr.; Mickey Eichner, Sr. VP, A&R; Edmunds; Marvin Cohn, Sr. VP business affairs and admin., CBS Records; John Scher, Edmunds' manager.

Rage To Live

THE PALLADIUM, NYC — Rage To Live's self-titled album on Bar None Records was one of the overlooked indie gems of 1986. The LP's integrity and adventurousness was the perfect antidote for a year that produced too little of both.

But the album doesn't quite prepare you for how well this band plays live. Rage To Live's recent show here captured the LP's spirit better than the record did, and suggested that they could well break out of the alternative circuit if they made an album that sounded like this show.

"Don't Worry Man," for example, was almost a throwaway on vinyl, but in concert it soared as vocalist Glenn Morrow harmonized with bassist Rich Grula on a chorus that sounded like the Byrds in their prime. Likewise, "Cause and Effect" — which on record comes off like an arena-rock miniature — took on an Aerosmith/Zeppelin ganticism, while other songs were given texture and depth by background singer Elly Brown.

But Rage To Live is not really about jangly prettiness at all; it's about grown-up garage rock, at once knowing and innocent, urban but not urbane. They have a charisma not unlike the Replacements, the organic let-the-song-emerge-from-the-chaos feel of the Feelies, and a strong guitar sound reminiscent of the early Jim Carroll Band.

Vocally, Morrow even sounds a bit like Carroll, though without the insistently accusatory tone and self-seriousness. At one point they even filled this over-sized disco with disco, playing the Hues Corporation's "Rock The Boat" in a send-up that was so double-edged that — get this — someone even asked me to dance (I tried to explain to her that the band was just joking).

Morrow is not afraid to take chances either, whether stretching for the falsetto note in "Rain" or throwing in a risky cover tune. Only on the set-closing "Enough Is Never Enough" did the band fail to meet

their own high standard, which is unfortunate because it's the best song they have and a potential knock-out in concert.

This was Morrow's first NY appearance in years and he played with the urgency of someone making up for lost time. Rage to Live is shaping the club-rock that Morrow's former band, The Individuals, helped define in the early eighties. But whether it can go overground and to the charts probably depends on how well they can capture their live sound on vinyl.

Paul Iorio

Dirty Dozen Brass Band/Allan Toussaint

BOTTOM LINE, N.Y.C. — Nothing could be finer, smack dab in the middle of a nasty New York City winter, than a musical taste of New Orleans. The Bottom Line served up a heaping plate of it, right before Mardi Gras, by double-billing The Dirty Dozen Brass Band with Allan Toussaint. You know the joint was jumping.

Allan Toussaint led things off with a snappy set of New Orleans r&b — most of it consisting of standards written, *naturalmente*, by Allan Toussaint. Toussaint's New York appearances are usually solo piano gigs, where he rambles through a bit of this and a bit of that — "and then I wrote this for so-and-so," "and then I wrote this for so-and-so" — but, at the Bottom Line, he was fronting a crackerjack septet, pinned down by the serious r&b rhythm combination of Bernard Purdie on drums and Wilbur Bascomb on electric bass. Toussaint — dressed to the nines in a glittering, Liberace-ish dinner jacket — was in good voice, good spirits, and ready to flash his Professor Longhair-drenched New Orleans piano. "Southern Nights" was done, of course, as were "Yes I Can, Can," "Mother-in Law," "Don't You Leave Me No More," and numerous other Toussaint chestnuts — a trumpet and saxophone adding a little oomph to the proceedings. A rocking good set, highlighted by a rollicking version of a non-Toussaint New

Orleans gem, "Rockin' Pneumonia and the Boogie-Woogie Flu."

The Dirty Dozen Brass Band was typically ebullient: playing their usual unusual blend of New Orleans marching band music, r&b, and bebop. Opening with Professor Longhair's "Mardi Gras in New Orleans" and closing with their medley of "The Theme from *The Flintstones*" and "The Star Spangled Banner" (and one or two others), the Dirty Dozen were as sassy as ever — sending a trumpeter out into the audience to play some wah-wah into several specially-picked women's crotches, doing their shake-the-walls "Feet Don't Fail Me Now," slithering through "Caravan." The set had panache, but the Dirty Dozen's material is beginning to wear a bit thin: they need to add a little lagniappe to their sets, dig up some new songs to bring north with them.

But, hey, is that a complaint? Not a chance. Not since Paul Prudhomme set up shop on Columbus Avenue has so big a slice of the Big Easy been available in New York at one sitting. No crawfish were dished up, no Dixie longnecks were chilling in the cooler, no big white oysters were being shucked, but, nonetheless, one could almost feel the heat of the swamp, smell the bayou. Just the kind of February treat that makes stomping into a knee-high pile of slush no big deal.

Lee Jeske

They Might Be Giants

CBGB, NYC — The first time I saw They Might Be Giants was a couple of years ago at an east Village dive called Neither/Nor, and my initial impression was that they were so talented they would probably never work again. Fortunately, I was wrong on the second count and right on the first; sheer talent has brought them a large enthusiastic cult following that may soon put them on the charts.

Guitarist John Flansburgh was amazed at the turnout. "We've been around for four years and this (he points to the front row) is usually our whole audience." But the crowd for this show (2/7) was packed far beyond the front tables and down along the aisle along the bar, to the pool tables in back

where people stood on benches to catch a glimpse.

Coming off a southern tour, this was They Might Be Giants' homecoming gig and the lower east side treated them like favorite sons. The Giants returned the favor by turning in a song-packed, tuned-up performance that showed real development over their earlier, more flamboyant shows. Gone were the over-size cue cards and puppet props that they used in early gigs to capture the attention of indifferent audiences who really didn't have a clue. Instead, they did a tight and loose set of great songs — songs within songs, genres within genres, songs without genres, and all of it spiced by endearingly eccentric stage patter that urged us to scream on cue and 'wave our purple toupees.'

"We're keeping southern rock alive at CBGB's," quipped Flansburgh, the main quipper of the evening. "We've just come off a southern rock tour and everybody shouted for 'Whipping Post.' So here's 'Whipping Post, in parentheses, (She's An Angel)," he said introducing "She's An Angel," a song that is about as far from the Allmans as imaginable.

Their sound is often quite close to the Kinks, which is partly due to John Linnell's voice and partly due to the structure of some of their songs. But the Giants take from a wide variety of sources. Their self-titled debut album on Bar/None Records is the "Pure Pop For Now People" of the '80's, every bit as packed with the witty, deceptively accessible multi-genre irony that made that album such a landmark. This is Nick Lowe if he had lived in the east Village, or Ray Davies if he had discovered tape loops twenty years ago, or Elvis Costello with a happy sex life, or Laurie Anderson gone CHR.

In short, they're like no one else, and eclecticism helps keep them that way. One of their best songs, "Hide Away Folk Family," started off like the theme to a spaghetti western, and gradually came to an impossibly fragile melodic peak before dissolving into the chaos just beneath the surface of most of their songs. "Youth Culture Killed My Dog" was a blast of updated '60's British-invasion pop that could pass for an "Argy Bargy" outtake, while "The World's Address" bordered on jazz cacophony. All of it though was done with a wit, intelligence, and sense of play that is sure to make these guys real musical giants — no might about it.

Paul Iorio



NO-NUKE DEMONSTRATORS—The KBC Band continued in the political activist tradition of members Paul Kantner, Marty Balin and Jack Casady by performing at a recent anti-nuclear demonstration in Mercury, Nevada. The demonstration, which resulted in 400 arrests, was held to protest the first U.S. nuclear test of 1987. Concern was voiced by the organizers of the protest that the test would trigger Soviet resumption of its own testing after an 18-month moratorium. The KBC Band, led by the three former members of Jefferson Airplane, performed songs from their current debut album on Arista Records.